

CERTAIN
PROPOSITIONS

By which the

DOCTRINE

OF THE

Holy Trinity

IS SO EXPLAINED,

According to the *ANCIENT FATHERS*,
as to speak it NOT Contradictory to
NATURAL REASON.

By the Right Reverend FATHER in GOD.
EDWARD, late Lord Bishop of *Glocester*.

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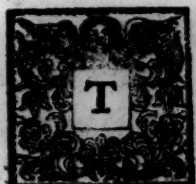
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C E R T A I N

Propositions, &c.



T H E Name of God is used in more Senses than one in Holy Scripture.

I.

The most Absolutely Perfect Being, is God in the highest Sense.

III.

Self-Existence is a Perfection, and seems to be the Highest of all Perfections.

IV.

God the Father alone, is in reference to His *Manner of Existence* an Absolutely

A 2

Perfect

Perfect Being ; because He alone is Self-Existent.

V.

He alone, consequently, is Absolutely Perfect, in reference to those Perfections, which do presuppose Self-Existence.

VI.

Those Perfections are *Absolute Independence*, and *Being the First Original of all other Beings*: In which the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost* are comprehended:

VII.

All *Trinitarians* do acknowledge, That these Two Persons are from God the Father. This is affirmed in that Creed which is called the *Nicene*, and in that which falsely bears the Name of *Athanasius*: Tho' with this Difference, that the *Holy Ghost* is asserted in them, to be from the *Son* as well as from the *Father*. Wherein the *Greek Church* differs from the *Latin*.

VIII.

It is therefore a flat Contradiction, to say

say that the Second and Third Persons are Self-Existent.

IX.

And therefore it is alike contradictory, to affirm them to be Beings absolutely perfect in reference to their *Manner of Existence* ; and to say that they have the Perfections of *Absolute Independence*, and of being the *First Originals of all Things*.

X.

Since the *Father* alone is a Being of the most absolute Perfection, He having those Perfections which the other Two Persons are incapable of having, He alone is *God* in the absolutely highest Sense.

XI.

And therefore our Blessed Saviour calls Him, *The only True God*, John xvii. 3. *This is Life Eternal, to know Thee the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.* And it is most absurd to think, That in these Words, and the following Prayer, He did address Himself to the Three Persons of the Trinity conjunctly, since throughout

out the Prayer He calls this *Only True God* his *Father* ; and calls Himself twice His *Son*, before these Words. Not to mention the Absurdity of making our Lord to pray to Himself, or of distinguishing Himself from those Three, of which Himself was One. If such a Liberty as this, in interpreting Scripture, be allowable, what Work may be made with Scripture !

XII.

Our Lord calls the Father, *The Only True God*, because He only is *Originally*, and of *Himself* God, and the First Original of all Beings whatsoever. As he calls Him the *Only Good*, saying, *There is none Good but God*, because He alone is *Originally* so, and the Spring of all that Good which is in other Beings.

XIII.

The Godhead, or God in this Highest Sense, can be but *One Numerically* : Of which the best Philosophers were satisfied by their Reason ; and therefore the *Oneness* so frequently affirmed of him in Scripture is a *Numerical Oneness*.

XIV. There

XIV.

There seems to be neither Contradiction, nor Absurdity, in supposing the First Original of all Things, to be productive of other Beings so perfect, as to have all Perfections, but that of *Self-Existence*, and those which are necessarily therein implied.

XV.

Supposing any such Beings to have immediately issued forth from that infinite Fulness, and Fœcundity of Being, which is in the Deity, each of them must have a Right to the Name of *God*, in a Sense *next* to that in which it is appropriated to the *Father* ; since they have all the Perfections of the *Godhead*, but those that must of Necessity be peculiar to *Him*.

XVI.

It is evident from the *Holy Scriptures*, That the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* are such Beings, viz. That they have all divine Perfections but the forementioned : Such as *Unlimited Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c.*

XVII. And

XVII.

And they are always spoken of in Scripture, as *Distinct Beings* or *Persons*, according to the Proper Signification of this Word, both from the *Father* and from *each Other*. Nor are so many Men or Angels more expressly distinguish'd as different Persons or Substances, by our Saviour or his Apostles, than the Father, Son and Holy Ghost still are.

XVIII.

It is a very presumptuous Conceit, that there can be no Way but that of *Creation*, whereby any thing can be immediately and onely from God, which hath a distinct Existence of its own. Or, That no Beings can have Existence from him, by way of *necessary Emanation*: Of which we have a *clearer Idea* than of Voluntary *Creation*. It is the Word of the Ancients, both Fathers and Philosophers; nor can a better be found to express what is intended by it, *viz.* A more excellent Way of existing, than that of *Creation*.

XIX. It

XIX.

It is no less presumptuous to affirm,
That it is a Contradiction to suppose,
That a Being can be from *Eternity* from
God the Father, if 'tis possible it may be
from him in a more excellent Way than
that of Creation. And we have an Illu-
stration of both these Propositions, by
something in Nature. For, according to
our Vulgar Philosophy, *Light* doth ex-
ist by necessary *Emanation* from the *Sun*,
and therefore the *Sun* was not before
the *Light* which proceeds from thence,
in Order of *Time*, though it be in Or-
der of *Nature* before it. And the Distin-
ction between these Two Priorities, is
much elder than *Thomas Aquinas* or *Peter*
Lombard, or any *School-man* of them all, or
Christian-man either.

XX.

And if any Thing can be from ano-
ther Thing by Way of necessary Ema-
nation, it is so far from a Contradiction
to suppose, that it must only be in Order
of *Nature* before it, that 'tis most appa-

B

rently

rently a Contradiction to suppose the contrary.

XXI.

Our 18th and 19th Propositions do speak our Explication of the Holy Trinity, to be as contrary to *Arianism* as to *Socinianism*; since the *Arians* assert that there was at least a Moment of Time, when the *Son* was not; and that He is a Creature.

XXII.

Although we cannot understand, how it should be no Contradiction, to affirm, That the Three Persons are but *One Numerical* Being, or Substance; yet hath it not the least shadow of a Contradiction to suppose, That there is an unconceivably close and inseparable *Union* both in Will and Nature between them. And such a Union may be much more easily conceived between *them*, than can that Union which is between our *Souls and Bodies*; since *these* are Substances which are of the most unlike and even contrary Natures.

XXIII. Since

XXIII.

Since we cannot conceive the First Original of All Things, to be more than *One Numerically*; and that we acknowledge the now mentioned Union between the Three Persons, according to the Scriptures, together with the intire Dependence of the two latter upon the First Person, The Unity of the Deity is, to all Intents and Purposes, as fully asserted by us, as it is necessary or reasonable it should be.

XXIV.

And no part of this Explication, do we think Repugnant to any Text of Scripture; but it seems much the easiest Way of Reconciling those Texts, which according to the other Hypotheses are not Reconcilable, but by offering manifest Violence to them.

XXV.

The *Socinians* must needs confess, that the Honour of the Father, for which they express a very Zealous Concern,

is as much as they can desire taken care of by this Explication. Nor can the Honour of the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* be more consulted, than by ascribing to them all Perfections, but what they cannot have, without the most apparent Contradiction, ascribed to them.

XXVI.

And we would think it impossible, that any Christian should not be easily perswaded, to think as honourably of his Redeemer and Sanctifier as he can, while he robs not God the Father for their sake ; and offers no Violence to the Sense and Meaning of Divine Revelations, nor to the Reason of his Mind.

XXVII.

There are many Things in the Notion of *One God*, which all hearty Theists will acknowledge necessary to be conceived of him, that are as much above the Reach and Comprehension of Humane Understandings, as is any part of this Explication of the *Holy Trinity*. Nay, this
may

may be affirmed, even of the Notion of *self-Existence* ; but yet there cannot be an *Atheist* so silly as to question it: Since it is not more evident, that *One* and *Two* do make *Three*, than that there could never have been *any thing*, if there were not *something* which was always, and never began to be.

XXVIII.

Left Novelty should be objected against this Explication, and therefore such should be prejudiced against it, as have a Veneration for Antiquity, we add, that it well agrees with the Account which several of the *Nicene* Fathers, even *Athanasius* himself, and others of the Ancients who treat of this Subject, do in divers Places of their Works give of the Trinity: As is largely shewed by two very * learned Divines of our Church. And had it not been for the *School-men*,

* *Dr. Cudworth* and *Dr. Bull*.

to whom Christianity is little beholden, as much as some admire them, we have Reason to believe that the World would not have been troubled, since the Fall of *Arianism*, with such Controversies about this great Point, as it hath been, and continues to be.

This Explication of the *Blessed Trinity* perfectly agrees with the *Nicene Creed*, as it stands in our Liturgy, without offering the least Violence to any one Word in it. Which makes our Lord Jesus Christ to be from God the Father by Way of *Emanation*; affirming him to be *God of God, very God of very God*, and metaphorically expressing it by *Light of Light*; answerably to what the Author to the *Hebrews* saith of Him, *Chap. i. ver. 3. viz.* That he is *Ἀπαύλασμα τῆς Δόξης*, The *Effulgency of his Glory*, *Χαρακτὴρ τῆς Ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, The *Character of his Substance*; And so is as much Of *One Substance* with the Father, as the *Beams* of the *Sun* are with the *Body* of it.

And

And since there have been of late, so many Explications or Accounts published of this most adorable Myſtery, which have had little better Succeſs than making Sport for the *Socinians*, I thought it very ſeaſonable now to revive *That*, which I affirm with great Aſſurance to be the moſt Ancient one of all; much elder than the Council of *Nice*; and to have much the feweſt Difficulties in it, and to be incomparably moſt agreeable to *Holy Scripture*.

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